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ABSTRACT

The Curriculum Orientation Profile was designed to assist in the identification of individual perspectives on curriculum and curricular decision-making. It contains 57 items, with which one agrees or disagrees. Each item is also given a code to be used in interpreting the score. Items with which one agrees are assigned to one of five codes, indicating the individual's orientations with respect to what the curriculum should do. The categories are: (1) development of cognitive processes; (2) curriculum as technology; (3) self actualization; (4) social reconstruction or relevance; and (5) academic rationalism. A graph is provided to indicate the importance of each of the five curriculum areas, as well as the 57 items. (GDC)

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A Curriculum Orientation Profile

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Curriculum's perdurable fabric is essentially that of content. The selection and organization of that "culture content" (Beauchamp, 1975) is the primary task of the curricularist and an awesome one at that. How to extract a substantive core in a rational and coherent way! How to obtain a focus notwithstanding the diversity of perspectives curriculum workers manifest in curriculum decision-making! Herein lies the crux of the problem: acknowledging the conflicting conceptions--philosophical and psychological--which individuals prescribe to in relation to curriculum.

The naivete of the 1960's is hopefully disappearing. During that period, it was believed that all you had to do was bring educators together and that they would become clones of the person officially responsible for curriculum change. It was assumed that everyone thought alike. How unfortunate! The result, on innumerable occasions, because the participants did not get to know and respect each other's curricular stance, was subterfuge, sabotage, and mediocrity. "Innovative" curricula became infectious; unpropitiously, they came and went never to be seen again. Too often, the human dimension was slighted and the emphasis was placed on production, a technological approach.

At present, many would argue that each individual develops a particular perspective vis-a-vis curriculum. Hyman (1973), Eisner-Vallance (1974), and McNeil (1977) have underscored the importance of philosophical and

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psychological orientations in relation to curriculum. The message which comes through in their writings, regardless of whether or not one agrees with their "pigeonholing", is that decision making, particularly as it relates to content selection and organization, quite often depends on assumptions underlying these differing orientations. Of equal import is the acknowledgment that these perspectives do exist and must be recognized by curriculum workers. Curriculum as a field of study reflects a continuum of ideologies, ranging from Tyler's ends-means model to the Schwab-Walker deliberative stance. Why do educators relate well to the classical model and frown upon Walker's naturalistic paradigm? Why do certain curricularists disavow this continuum altogether and prescribe to reconceptualizing?

The frameworks provided by Hyman, Eisner-Vallance, and McNeil help to clarify these questions. On the basis of their writings, it is possible to take a look at the why of curriculum decision-making. Approaches to curriculum design may differ as a result of "distinct conceptual biases" (Eisner-Vallance, 1974, p. 2). Although somewhat arbitrary, these clusters of distinctions may provide a means for analyzing the broad range of diverse approaches to curriculum decision-making, a process which many curricularists see as a critically important first step.

The purpose of this article is not to outline the orientations delineated by these educators, but to provide the reader with a device which may assist in the identification of particular curricular thrusts. A comprehensive interpretation of these diverse perspectives may be found in the basic references.

What follows is a curriculum orientation profile. The author encourages

the reader to make use of it, to adapt it, and to provide feedback for amelioration.

References

1. Beauchamp, G. Curriculum theory. Wilmette: The Kagg Press, 1975.

2. Eisner, E.W., & Vallance, E. Conflicting conceptions of curriculum. Berkeley: McCutchan Publishing Corp., 1974.

3. Hyman, R.T. (Ed.). Approaches in curriculum. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973.

4. Leithwood, K. A decision-oriented strategy for curriculum implementation. Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1976.

5. McNeil, J.D. Curriculum: a comprehensive introduction. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977.

Author's Note:

The orientations featured in this profile are those presented and explained in Eisner-Vallance, 1974. The reader is encouraged to refer to this provocative text for additional information relative to the assumptions underlying each of these approaches. McNeil, 1977, in his textbook, accepts four of these conceptions but excludes "development of cognitive processes". Leithwood, 1976, excludes "technology" with the argument that each of these orientations has its own inherent technology.

CURRICULUM ORIENTATION PROFILE

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These statements represent a set of value "signposts" which may help you discover your orientation relative to the content, goals, and organization of the curriculum. These statements identify a broad range of very different approaches to questions persistently asked in the curriculum field: What can and should be taught to whom, when, and how?

A. As you peruse the list, decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement and check the appropriate column.

B. Once you have completed the exercise, move on to Step II which you will find at the end of the list.

		A		DA
1.	The curriculum should provide students with intellectual autonomy.		1	
2.	The curriculum should stress societal needs over individual needs.		4	
3.	The curriculum should be primarily humanistic and existential.		3	
4.	The curriculum should be preoccupied with the development of means to achieve prespecified ends.		2	
5.	The curriculum should be concerned with the technology by which knowledge is communicated and learning is facilitated.		2	
6.	Not all subject matters are created equal.		5	
7.	The emphasis should be on problem-solving, or the discovery approach to learning.		1	
8.	The curriculum should feature heuristic questions--the type that stimulate curiosity and generate speculation.		1	
9.	The overall goals of education should be concerned with the relation of the curriculum to society as it should be as opposed to society as it is.		4	

		A		DA
10.	The curriculum should be deliberately value saturated.		3	
11.	The curriculum reflects finding efficient means to a set of predetermined, nonproblematic ends.		2	
12.	Objectives should be stated in specific, unambiguous terms.		2	
13.	The curriculum should be an active force having direct impact on the whole fabric of its human and social context.		4	
14.	Education is seen as a means of helping the individual discover things for himself.		3	
15.	Curriculum is expressed in concise, terse, skeletally logical, crystalline language.		2	
16.	The learner is seen as interactive and adaptive.		1	
17.	Curriculum should focus on personal purpose; the need for personal integration.		3	
18.	The curriculum should provide the learner with opportunities to acquire the most powerful products of man's intelligence.		5	
19.	Social reform and responsibility to the future of society are the primary goals of schooling.		4	
20.	The curriculum should serve as a vehicle for fostering critical discontent in society.		4	
21.	Curriculum should stress refinement of intellectual operations.		1	
22.	The established disciplines of knowledge are essential.		5	
23.	Education should provide content and tools for further self-discovery.		3	
24.	The focus should be on the learning process per se.		1-2	
25.	Driver training dilutes the quality of education.		5	
26.	Management by objectives should be an integral part of the curriculum.		2	
27.	The focus should be on the how (process) rather than the what; instructional effectiveness.		1-2	

		A		DA
28.	The curriculum materials, when used by intended learners, should produce specified learning competencies.		2	
29.	The goals of education should be formulated in dynamic personal process terms.		3	
30.	Curriculum should be based on the structure of the academic disciplines (the primarily intellectual ones).		5	
31.	The primary goal should be the development of cognitive skills that can be applied to learning virtually anything.		1	
32.	The curriculum should focus on the exploitation of resources, pollution, warfare and water; the effect of population increase; the unequal use of natural resources; propaganda; and self-control in the interest of one's fellows.		4	
33.	Curriculum should include action programs designed to improve social life in the community.		4	
34.	Curriculum should provide the tools for individual survival in an unstable and changing world.		4	
35.	Curriculum emanates from the particular interests of particular children.		3	
36.	Curriculum should include works of art that have withstood the test of time.		5	
37.	Curriculum should provide the means to personal liberation and development.		3	
38.	The curriculum should undertake community-oriented service tasks.		4	
39.	Curriculum should represent cultural transmission in the most specific sense.		5	
40.	Curriculum should reflect current real-life situations.		4	
41.	Learning occurs in certain systematic and predictable ways.		2	
42.	Curriculum should provide access to the greatest ideas and objects that man has created.		5	
43.	The curriculum should advocate adaptation as the means of effecting smooth change.		4	

		A		DA
44.	The concern should be very much on what is taught.		3-5	
45.	Private meaning is very important.		3	
46.	Curriculum should provide satisfactory consummatory experience for each learner.		3	
47.	The Bloom taxonomy with its six cognitive hierarchical levels should play an important part in the curriculum.		1	
48.	The curriculum should focus on highly structured tasks, each of which builds upon what has gone before and prepares for what is to come.		2	
49.	The student should play a major role in generating his own educational purposes.		3	
50.	Education should stress the leading ideas that have animated mankind.		5	
51.	The school should be the agent for social change.		4	
52.	Education is an integrative, synthesizing force--a total experience responsible to the individual's needs for growth and personal integrity.		3	
53.	The real task of the educator arises in organizing the material sometime before the learner ever enters the classroom.		2	
54.	Educators should be concerned about teaching the processes by which learning occurs in the classroom.		1	
55.	Problem-solving skills are more important than particular content or knowledge.		1	
56.	The curriculum should emphasize not topics or subjects but forms of thought.		5	
57.	Both the conceptual and the syntactical structures of the disciplines are significant factors in curriculum.		5	

Step II. (Complete the first part of the exercise before you read this section.)

Next to each item you have checked, you will find a number or numbers which identify a specific orientation to curriculum (column 2); namely,

1 - Development of cognitive processes.

2 - Curriculum as technology.

3 - Self-actualization, or curriculum as consummatory experience.

4 - Social reconstruction - relevance.

5 - Academic rationalism.

Check your list (the AGREE column) and tally the total number of each of the above orientations. For example: perhaps you have a total of 10 one's (cognitive processes) and 6 two's (technology). Plot your results on the enclosed line graph. The graph will provide you with a "profile" which should reflect your dominant thrust in curriculum. Virtually all curricula that have been produced reflect different degrees of each of these orientations.

Totals:	1	_____	CP
	2	_____	T
	3	_____	SA
	4	_____	SR
	5	_____	AR

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